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features

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The wizard of oddz

This is our election edition and it is vital that we pay attention to politics now. At first glance, this election may appear to be of little consequence, perhaps even boring, but make no mistake; it is far from irrelevant. There is much more at stake than first meets the eye. In fact, this may well be the most important election of our lifetime.

Behind the mask of spin control lurks fundamental principle on how Canada's future will be shaped. It's time to take a sober look at whom we will choose to represent us. It is truly epic. The forces of corporatist control are being pitted against personal freedom, tyranny against democracy, secrecy against transparency and ethics against deceit. Our choices will dramatically affect society, civil liberties and the environment.

This is not a new battle. It has been going on for centuries within the rise and fall of empires and countries. We, the people, need to cooperate and share power in an open, democratic society rather than being terrorized into accepting a dictator who promises to protect us. Since the time of Caesar and before, tyrants have never really done much good for the citizens. As Benjamin Franklin said in 1775, "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." Lord Acton echoed that sentiment in 1887, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Here is the story about our Wizard of Oddz "Think smart, Vote strategically" cover. Combining myth, fantasy and an epic odyssey, we find our host of characters representing the gestalt of the times. The scarecrow represents the farmers who were muddled and didn't know the game the bankers were playing. The tin man, who was originally fully human, became mostly a machine because the longer he worked, every time he swung his axe he cut off another part of his body until he turned into a machine and could no longer feel his heart. The lion represents all people in society who have given up their power and who now need to claim their courage to defend their fellow brother and sisters against impersonal powers. And Dorothy represents the everyday, wholesome woman who needs to find her personal power and the way home to her authentic self.

The 'hurricane,' which represented the stormy 1896 presidential election between William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley, lifts Dorothy's house that landed in Oz and crushed the wicked witch of the east, who represented the eastern bankers of London and New York. The Munchkins (US voters) then celebrated the death of the wicked witch.

In L. Frank Baum's original book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), the slippers from the dead witch were not ruby slippers (as portrayed in the 1939 film), but silver slippers. Wearing them was the only way Dorothy (common folk) could safely walk

the yellow brick road to the Emerald City. The yellow brick road represented the gold standard by which the bankers controlled the nation. The people living in the middle of the country had an abundance of silver and wanted the government to use silver as well as gold for the coin of the realm, however in a fair ratio. The bankers, who controlled the gold and hence the money system of that time, did not want that to happen and put their massive wealth behind McKinley. The name Wizard of Oz refers to the abbreviation for ounce (oz.) relating to ounces of silver vs. gold.

Now, there was one lovely witch from the north (Canadians) and one from the south (Mexicans) who were very different than the wicked witch of the west. The wicked witch represented the privileged gold moneyed bankers and large landowners in California, who, through their debt-creating deceit, had enslaved many of the farmers experiencing drought. The farmers' crops failed, forcing them to borrow money at usury rates in order to keep their homes or otherwise become sharecroppers on the land they once farmed.

On the way to the Emerald City, Dorothy falls asleep in a field of poppies (a metaphor for the loss of awareness). Ultimately, she is saved by a friend – we need all our friends – after integrating the various characters that represent lost parts of our self and society. Dorothy finally reaches the temple of wealth, the Emerald City. There, she encounters the alleged, all-powerful wizard ruler, who commands her to perform a task that would likely kill her off to prevent her from meddling in the affairs of state.

Instead, after being attacked by the flying monkeys, she encounters the witch, who sets fire to the scarecrow and Dorothy intuitively acts to protect him. She tosses a bucket of water on the wicked witch of the west who shrivels up and dies shrieking, "I am melting, I am melting." This water symbolizes the returning rains that end the drought, thus releasing the farmers from the clutches of the banks; they could now grow food again.

Well, that was then and this is now. Our election will be lost or won by the people of Canada or the power elite of foreign multinationals. If we use our brains to understand politics, engage our hearts and passionately find our courage to stand for what is ethical, wise and compassionate, we, the people of Canada, will find our way back home. Somewhere over the rainbow where democracy is guided by a government that reflects the will of people cooperating to support a healthy planet is our true home and native land. Governments and empires come and go, but a good planet is hard to find.

In this election, let's please work together. Let's use our body, mind, heart and soul to realize our potential as Canadians. Let's create a better world for all. May the Wizard of Oddz be with us. ◀

All political parties were invited to participate in this special election edition of **Common Ground**.

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My Tory nightmare

Tossing and turning with Harper at the helm

I have a dream. A recurring nightmare, actually.

It always begins with me in a Tory re-education camp, sharing a bunk bed with *Province* cartoonist Dan Murphy. Without warning, I'm dragged from my mattress and frog-marched off to art class by a steroid-inflated Rex Murphy look-alike in camouflage pants. Sticking a brush in my hand, he points to a blank canvas and barks an order. I must paint a flattering portrait in oils of the Prime Minister-for-life. In a few dreamlike instants, I'm finished. Stephen Harper stands proudly in white military uniform decorated with glittering medals. His helmet hair is topped with a peaked cap, his rosebud lips pursed in concentration. His gun-metal grey eyes look off to the distance, an arm raised in salute to a sea of Canadians dressed in rags. A formation of F-35s hangs in the sky, with the Parliament buildings reduced to smoking rubble in the background. In the upper left corner, a bearded God looks down from the clouds and gives the thumbs-up signal.

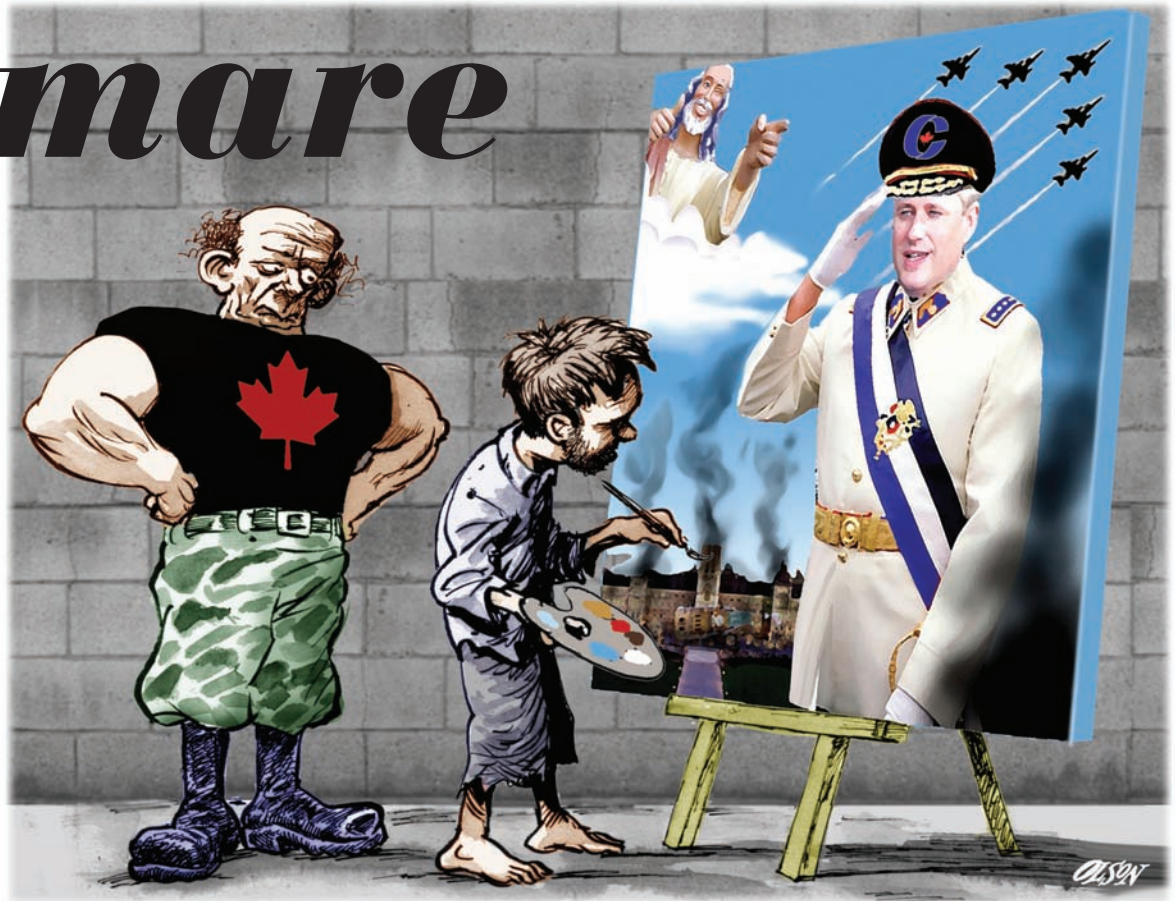
The dream always ends the same way. Giddy with paint fumes, I sign the canvas "Leonardo di Squeegee" in a token act of resistance. I'm slapped and dragged off to solitary confinement, with nothing for company but a tin cup and the collected works of Mark Steyn.

I could say that Harper and his rebranded Conservative party have been a great gift to some political cartoonists – but not for me. Sure, his serial offences in Parliament make for great material at the drafting board (what's bad for the public is usually good for the pen), but drawing the doughy, blank-faced occupant of 24 Sussex Drive is like trying to bottle fog.

Anyway, back to my dream. It's in jest, but there's a real political nightmare to inspire it. At this point, after all the news reports of deception and deceit by the Harper government, I have to wonder who would still vote for a member of Parliament who reports to this dude. The thought that some pro-Harper voters haven't been paying attention is scary enough. What's scarier is the thought that some *have*.

The other scary thing is the free ride given to the Prime Minister by the national press. When the House Speaker ruled the Conservative government in contempt of Parliament, there seemed to be a collective shrug among commentators and pundits. Radio and television news should have hammered on this historic first like the 'Commonwealth Drum Festival.' There should have been screaming, 72-point headlines in the newspapers for days and planes trailing banners in the sky, reading, "Harper in Contempt of Parliament," "Canadian Leader Defecates on Democracy" and "Prime Minister Now Officially a Great Bejayus of a Puckered Anus."

I don't have the space or the stomach to list all the offences the Harper government crowbarred into six years. So here's a brief recap of the most recent, starting with the PM's romance with men in uniform. He's 'Best Subarctic Friend Forever' to military



lobbyists; in October 2010, Auditor General Sheila Fraser found the federal government had violated federal rules and regulations by earmarking \$4.9 billion for 15 helicopters, an order placed without competition. Now dig deep into your pockets, you taxpaying schmucks, for \$29 billion to buy 65 useless fighter jets. Actually, the real cost of those fighters is unknown. Harper won't tell you. It's part of that whole "contempt of Parliament" thing he's got going on, but don't bother protesting it. Under his reign, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms might as well be a shooting range target.

Arms, armoured vehicles, singing gigs at Tory functions and campaign stops, a big fat finger directed at voters paying for his publicly-pimped ride to the polls – what's next, a rap video?

There is no end in sight to our mission-free mission in Afghanistan. Harper has reneged on a promise to withdraw all Canadian troops from the nation by 2011, without allowing the matter to go to a vote in the House. Then there's his position on Israel – on bended knee. From the attacks in the occupied territories to Israel's 2006 bombing raids in Lebanon, his friends in the Mideast can do no wrong. Harper saves the withdrawing of support for his own people: women's groups, aboriginals and non-governmental organizations. Look hard enough at some recent domestic Canadian disasters and you often find Tory fingerprints near the crime scene. Some critics say even on lunchmeat. Three years ago, Luc Pomerleau, a biologist at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency came across secret government plans to weaken regulations and allow the meat industry to conduct their own safety inspections. He leaked the news and was promptly fired in July 2008. The listeriosis meat outbreak followed, from August to December 2008, killing 17 Canadians.

It just goes on and on, an eye-glazing catalogue of nastiness, corruption and institutionalized idiocy: the transformation of Canada's international image from peacekeeper to torture-enabler. The caging and physical abuse of demonstrators and

other civilians at the G20 meeting, with the biggest mass arrest in Canadian history. The deceit about the money spent on that meeting. The surveillance and removal of schoolgirls from Tory campaign stops. The gagging of Environment Canada scientists. Mandatory minimum prison sentences for minor drug offences. Building more prisons in a time of lowered crime rates. The breaking of election spending laws.

The only positive thing you can say of the Harper reign is that it would make one hell of a Broadway musical by the guys behind South Park.

Harper himself is something of a black box. He plays his cards close to the chest and there's good reason for that. For decades, he has belonged to the Alliance Church, a body that won't ordain women, denounces homosexuality, strongly opposes abortion and divorce and believes Christ will return during the Apocalypse. Evangelical Christians recognize the PM as one of their own, but there's no political capital to be made by admitting his religious beliefs explicitly since that would alienate the majority of voters.

If you want a peek into the man's cobwebbed, pre-Enlightenment mind, look to the speech he gave in 1997 to a conservative American religious group, when Harper was with the far-right National Citizens Coalition. He told the crowd that Canada is "a Northern European welfare state in the worst sense of the term, and very proud of it." Prior to the emergence of Preston Manning's Reform Party, he said the Progressive Conservatives "were in favour of gay rights officially, officially for abortion on demand. Officially? what else can I say about them? Officially for the entrenchment of our universal, collectivized, health-care system and multicultural policies in the constitution of the country."

What scares me isn't any one of the Tory policies. It's the sum of them that show their leader aims to build a bridge to the nineteenth century. But ultimately Harper is a bobblehead, even if the Prime Minister's Office has been sending out directives to change "The Government of Canada" to "The Harper Government" on federal communications. This is much bigger than personalities, although the corporate elite would prefer we keep thinking it isn't. This is about the political culture that spawned the party that swept him into power and an associated network of right-wing think tanks, politically



For decades, he has belonged to the Alliance Church, a body that won't ordain women, denounces homosexuality, strongly opposes abortion and divorce and believes Christ will return during the Apocalypse.

connected evangelical groups, American lobbyists and national media apparatchiks.

My true nightmare is this: the endgame is approaching for the Canada of Lester Pearson and Tommy Douglas. The process began in the late eighties with Preston Manning's Reform party, which managed to become the Official Opposition in 1997, in part through its Bible Belt populism. In 2000, it voted itself out of existence and was replaced by the Canadian Alliance – essentially, a rebranding. In 2002 the Canadian Alliance elected Harper as leader.

There was still work to do. At the 2003 Progressive Conservative leadership convention, leadership candidate David Orchard brokered a deal with candidate Peter MacKay, sending delegates his way with the condition there would be no merger talks with the Alliance. It was a signed agreement. In October 2003, MacKay and Stephen Harper signed an agreement in principle to merge the Progressive Conservatives and the Alliance to form the new Conservative Party of Canada.

No one talks about this simple fact: the rebranded Tory party was midwived by a broken promise. It was and is a legislative lie, born and raised in a political brothel. It has taken decades for far-right interests to get one of their own into the Prime Minister's office and all they need now is just one thing to complete their public sector vanishing act: a Conservative majority in the House of Commons.

"All our options are terrible, that's why I don't vote; what's the point if it's between a giant douche and a turd sandwich?" an anonymous correspondent wrote me recent-

ly. I appreciate the sentiment, which is widespread, but I can't abide the indifference. True, there is no guarantee this country is going to do a great deal better with Liberal leader Ignatieff at the helm. At a certain level, federal elections are sound-and-fury spectacles for the media owners and their customers. But given the stakes involved, it's too risky to shrug and say the two leaders are the same, as well as their parties. Not only that, NDP leader Jack Layton and Green leader Elizabeth May are as different from the frontrunners as maple syrup is from overproof rum. Our menu of electoral options, while hardly inspiring, are still better than the prison grub offered US voters every four years.

Democracies, like houseplants, wither and die from neglect. I don't know what else to say, other than to direct some final words to any younger readers who have miraculously reached the bottom of an 1,800-word rant.

Hey, you. Yes, you. Your vote is critical this election. The 'Tory Death Star' wasn't constructed just to troll through your Facebook accounts and triangulate camera-friendly mothers with narcotized babies. It's preparing a giant tractor beam to Hoover up schoolbooks, hospital beds, prescriptions, middle class paycheques and binding agreements. In other words, pretty much anything still left that makes this nation different from the United States. So if you are still feeling indifferent or undecided about the MPs running in your area, there's plenty of info on the Internet to keep you informed. If that's not enough, please access 'The Force' or a triple-shot designer coffee to get you down to a ballot booth Election Day, May 2nd. When you get that little wooden pencil in your hand, remember that's your light sabre. For democracy's sake, don't go over to the 'Dark Side' when you scribble your X.

This whole democracy thing may seem so "last millennium," but if you want to live in a country that isn't a mashup of North Korea and West Virginia, you need to make your mark. If you won't do it for yourself or your country, do it for a middle-aged political cartoonist so he can at least have an easier target to draw in the Prime Minister's office. [◀](#)

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It's not enough just to vote

Why Canada's democracy needs an upgrade

In the last federal election, a stunning 41 percent of eligible voters – or 5,382,130 Canadians – abstained from voting. In fact, more Canadians abstained from voting in the general election of 2008 than the number of Canadians who cast a ballot for the Conservative Party that came to form government, in fact about 170,800 more! Yet what is even more alarming is that voter apathy has grown by more than two million people over the course of the three previous federal elections held since 2000. Not good.

Why are more and more people getting turned off from voting? Well, there are a variety of inter-locking reasons. One reason is attack ads. Pollster Angus Reid Strategies found that 10 percent of all eligible voters, regardless of age, said they were turned-off from voting because of attack ads. Yet these aren't just any voters. They're mostly swing voters.

Swing voters are the traditional king-makers in our democracy and they tend to be moderate centrists. Moreover, they generally don't see themselves as belonging to any one ideological tribe. What's more, swing voters generally vote for the ideas and people they like, based on a basket of both rational and emotional impressions. So it's not surprising politicians and their handlers will go to inordinate lengths to find out what swing voters want. It is one reason why they hire silver-tongued devils to write their speeches, and image consultants who tell them how to dress and comb their hair (assuming they have any) and who remind them to smile as much as possible so as to always seem friendly. If the voters like tinsel, talk about tinsel even if the politician doesn't give a damn about the stuff. It's what they want to hear.

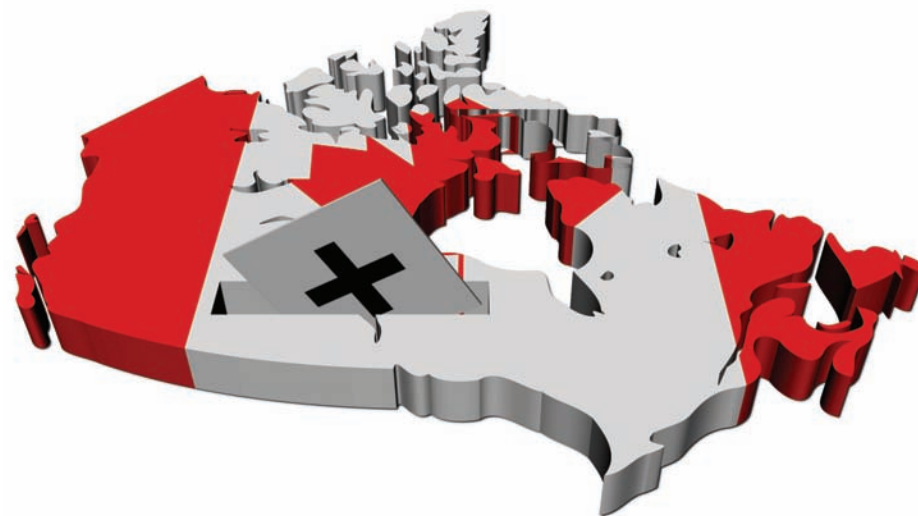
But when verbal flowers and chocolate promises fail to do the trick, politicians resort to another tactic, the attack ad. Attack ads are tattle-tale narratives designed to highlight the nastier side of one's opponents. The goal, of course, is to turn swing voters off from considering the merits of their rivals. Yet rather than helping to woo "temperamental" swing voters their way, the vitriol of attack ads so offends their sensibilities it turns them off from voting altogether. And the more swing voters disengage from voting, the worse the attack ads can become, creating a vicious negative feedback loop that's hard to break.

But that's not the worst of it. Eventually, strategists use this 'voter suppression effect' as a deliberate psychological-warfare tactic. The goal is to so demoralize those who support one's opponents that it even causes some of a party's traditional soft-supporters to leave the voting field as well. It's a tactic the Conservative Party used to such great effect in the 2008 federal election. An estimated one million "soft-Liberals" stayed at home largely because of the Conservative's attack ad strategy aimed at Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion.

The baby-rattle effect

Unfortunately, one of the larger psycho-social side effects of the attack ad strategy is that it polarizes political discussions to such an extent that other important social issues are blown off the political map. Call it a variant of the baby-rattle effect. Shake a rattle in front of a crying baby and, more often than not, it's enough to distract the baby from crying. A similar thing happens in the political context. When citizens start talking about things that really matter to them, matters that detract from the agenda the political party in power or seeking power wants to advance, one way to derail the people's original conversation is to introduce an attack ad. Like a baby rattle, it quickly shifts attention to a topic other than the one originally being talked about.

One example is the longstanding need for democratic reforms to our electoral system. It's an issue that first came to prominence in the mid-90s thanks largely to the distortive effects caused by our first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system to



representative democracy across Canada.

Few people realize FPTP only works well in a two-party system, as is found in the US. But start adding parties and the system begins to behave in very new ways, ways that begin to distort electoral outcomes and disenfranchise large swaths of the voting population because it leads to vote splitting. For example, vote splitting between the former Progressive Conservative Party and the former Reform Party is what allowed the Liberal Party under Jean Chrétien to win a "majority" in the 1997 federal election with only 38.5 percent of the popular vote. Similarly, during the election of 2000, the Liberals won another majority with only 40 percent of the popular vote.* (See the website version of this article for more numerical detail.)

Yet despite the appearances of democratic propriety, our current democratic system of government is anything but representative. In fact, it fails one of the key tests in what makes a democracy healthy: numerically fair representation. For example, in Ontario, despite the fact 32 percent of eligible voters cast ballots for the Tories in 2004, they only received 23 percent of the seats, all thanks to our FPTP system. And in western Canada, the distortions were even greater. Conservatives took a whopping 74 percent of the available seats with only 45 percent of the popular vote.

Many political scientists concluded outcomes like these not only caused immense region-based frustrations, they were also causing many to lose faith in the fairness of our democratic system. And nowhere is this more evident than with the youth vote. During the 2008 general election, only 37.4 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 25 even bothered to vote, a figure that also held true during the 2004 election. Why bother voting, they say, if your vote doesn't actually count for anything?

On December 9, 2010, the CBC released the results of an EKOS poll that looked at the voting intentions of people younger than 25-years-old. In a hypothetical parliament where only they were permitted to cast a vote in a general election, the Green Party scored in the upper 30 percent range, which would equate to about 150 to 160 seats in the House of Commons. A majority currently requires 155 seats. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, scored about 15 percent, which would translate into the equivalent of 12 seats if our current multi-party FPTP electoral system were used. Talk about the shoe suddenly being on the younger generation's foot.

The poll also looked at a hypothetical parliament where only seniors were permitted to vote in a general election. Under this scenario, nearly half of all seniors would vote for the Conservative Party and because seniors have such a high voter turnout (about 68 percent), they would win a 250 seat majority. The Green Party would win no seats. (See the website version of this article for even more detail.)

The sad fact is people are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the inequities built into our FPTP voting system. And it's not hard to see why, especially when it

comes to the Green Party. During the 2008 election, the Greens received nearly one million votes – 6.8 percent of the overall popular vote – but did not win a single seat in the House of Commons. If ours were a purely proportional representation system, the Green Party would likely have won 21 seats in the House of Commons, not zero! It's no wonder so many Canadians are livid over the exclusion of the Green Party's Elizabeth May from the National Leaders' debates during the current election campaign period.

This problem hasn't gone unnoticed in technical circles. To resolve the problem, in 2004, the Law Commission of Canada released a report entitled Voting Counts. It called on all parties to replace our FPTP system with a mixed-member proportional system (or MMP), akin to what's found in New Zealand and Germany. It would blend our current FPTP system with a proportional representation system in the lower House. (See <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/J31-61-2004E.pdf>)

To date, none of the currently elected federal parties have taken any significant action to reform our existing electoral system – for a range of self-serving reasons, some would say. For example, proportional representation (or PR) would undermine the political headlock each of the two dominant mainstream parties has on one region or another in the country. Take Alberta for example. There, the Conservative Party now holds all but one of its seats in the House of Commons, a virtual monopoly. Under PR, however, this would likely come to an end. Not exactly reassuring news for Alberta's oil industry, which can still make sizeable corporate donations to Alberta's provincial Conservative Party, as permitted under provincial law. We'll let you connect the rest of the dots.

As Gordon Gibson succinctly put it in the April 13 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, the “iron rule of politics says no one ever voluntarily gives up power.” In other words, behind-the-scenes, the corporate bottom line will almost always trump equitable representation in a democracy. And when people refrain from voting, they help ensure this remains the case. So what's to be done?

Some believe the next national census and the likely augmentation in House seats this could bring would, from a timing point of view anyway, provide Parliament with



Pollster Angus Reid Strategies found that 10 percent of all eligible voters, regardless of age, said they were turned-off from voting because of attack ads. Yet these aren't just any voters. They're mostly swinging voters.

a realistic opportunity to bring in some measure of proportional representation to the House of Commons. One problem is it is doubtful the relatively small number of seats involved would be anywhere near enough to resolve the significant representational distortions found across the country. If anything, it would be little more than a band-aid solution, and a pretty small one at that. What's the alternative?

Enter the Canadian Senate

Bringing an elected Senate into being may be one of our best chances to get proportional representation in Parliament within the foreseeable future. Few people realize that 73 percent of Canadians surveyed want a new approach to the Senate; 69 percent want a national referendum on the subject; 67 percent want to be able to elect our Senators; and 65 percent feel that Mr. Harper was being hypocritical about reforming the senate in view of his appointment of 18 senators in December of 2008, nine in August of 2009 and another six in January of 2010. (Source: Angus Reid survey issued February 4, 2010.)

To give credit where it is due, the Conservative Party made some effort to move in this direction with the introduction of Senate Bill S-8, a bill that would legally permit provinces to hold elections for Senators, and which would oblige the Prime Minister to recommend them to the Crown. In the short term, the bill alleviates the need to seek a constitutional amendment, which is usually a bumpy ride at best. However, there are a few stipulations that must be added to Bill S-8. Senate elections need to be held concurrently across a given province with a PR intent outcome and they should

ideally fall under federal election funding laws, not provincial laws which would allow corporate contributions to campaigns.

Unfortunately, so far, neither the Liberals nor the NDP or the Bloc Québécois have offered any better democratic alternative. Both the Liberals and the Bloc have a vested political interest in seeing the Conservatives mired in a constitutional amendment crisis. It would be like watching a dinosaur trying to escape the La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles. By comparison, the Liberal Party's proposal for an independent third-party Senate appointments commission is dismally unimaginative. It not only fails to fix the flaws of our current FPTP system, but it actually helps to perpetuate the existence of an unelected chamber overseeing the affairs of an elected one no less; it's not what most people want.

I was of the impression that, in democratic societies, one non-partisan idea above all others was supposed to rule supreme: those who govern derive their moral authority to do so only with the consent of the governed and such consent only comes through free and fair elections. An appointments commission completely ignores the need for a democratically-legitimate process, which makes Mr. Ignatieff's denunciation of Stephen Harper's abuse of democracy appear rather hypocritical.

Sadly, many politicians still think Senate reform is a back-burner issue of such low priority that it's unworthy of discussion in the current election. They assume the public simply doesn't care. Yet when you look at the matter through the lens of Canada's need for major democratic reforms, it suddenly takes on far more importance, if not urgency.

Ensuring reforms to our democratic system

There is only one way to exit from the political alienation vortex we now find ourselves in and that's to vote. Vote strategically where you feel it's justified, but be sure you are voting for a candidate whose past actions have demonstrated a clear and emphatic commitment to electoral reform because deeds always speak louder than words. And if you find yourself in a place where such evidence is scant, be sure you only vote for a candidate willing to make a very public declaration that he or she pledges to reform our current FPTP system with one that incorporates a reasonable measure of proportional representation, and who, if elected, will demand it is made a top priority during the next session of Parliament.

Public pressure is great. But only votes will help to change things. And don't let politicians distract you with the baby-rattle effect of attack ads. And where aspiring candidates refuse to go on the public record in this regard, register your protest by voting for one of the opponents you think stands the best chance of beating them. If you make democratic reform your highest voting issue priority, politicians who fail to heed the message will pay the ultimate democratic price: defeat come polling day.

It's time. Time for the 41 percent of eligible voters who chose not to vote in the last election to do so on May 2. If they do, our lives and our country will be the better for it for many years to come. ◀

*On the turnout decline in recent elections, see André Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Nadeau and Neil Nevitte, *Anatomy of a Liberal Victory: Making Sense of the Vote in the 2000 Canadian Election* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 45–63; and Jon H. Pammett, **The People's Verdict** in Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, eds., *The Canadian General Election of 2000*, Chapter 13 (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), pp. 293–317.

Paul LeMay is a Vancouver-based independent science writer, with an academic background in psychology. He is currently co-writing a book on the victimization process with an Ottawa-based psychiatrist. A former special assistant to the late Liberal Senator Sheila Finestone, PC, and a blood-relation of former Liberal Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Paul made a conscious choice not to renew his membership in the Liberal Party of Canada after 2009. While he remains very supportive of many individual Liberal candidates in BC's lower mainland, like Joyce Murray in Vancouver Quadra and Ujjal Dosanjh in Vancouver South, in his own electoral district of Vancouver Centre, he has recently decided he will be voting for the Green Party candidate, Adriane Carr, in the upcoming election, in large part because of that party's commitment to proportional representation and his own desire for real democracy.

For more about what is wrong with the FPTP electoral system see YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7tWHJfhiyo&feature=share> or <http://blog.cgpgrey.com>

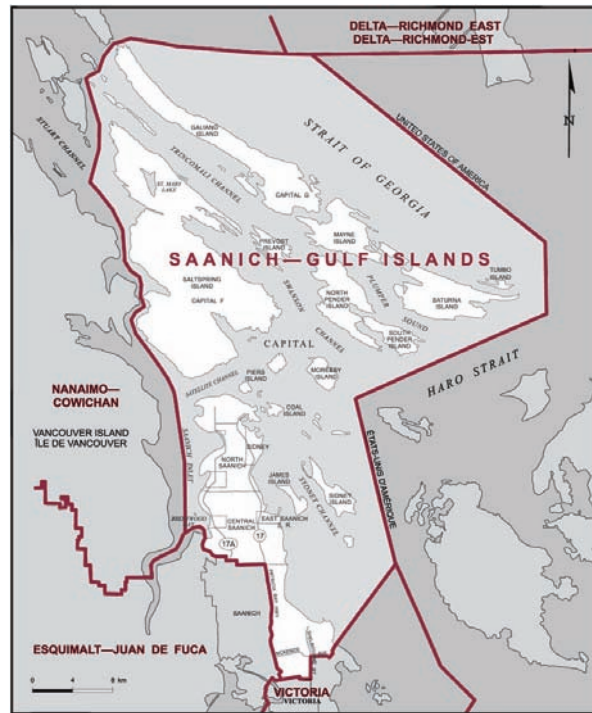
May vs Lunn in Saanich Gulf-Islands

To make history as the first Green Party member elected to Canada's parliament, leader Elizabeth May must get past the incumbent, Conservative Gary Lunn. Luckily for May, who is positioning herself as the best candidate to beat Lunn, there is still a strong odour lingering from Lunn's 'victory' in 2008, an odour that has yet to completely disappear. Complaints filed by constituents with Elections Canada remain unresolved, as do many unanswered questions asked in the House of Commons.

People in the riding will recall Lunn was in a tight fight with environmentalist Liberal Briony Penn, who came within 2,700 votes of unseating a cabinet minister often disparagingly lampooned in *Frank* magazine. The Ottawa-based magazine, familiar to many Canadians, was a popular, behind-the-scenes scandal sheet. Unfortunately, it ceased publication in October 2008.

Penn, in an interview, sounds like she's still recovering. "I just felt like I was brutalized for two years," she said. "There's huge deterrence to running when you're up against an oil patch that's merciless, that will do anything to win."

On the eve of the 2008 election, automated phone calls to people in the riding encouraged them to support NDP candidate Julian West. Problem is the calls went out 20 days *after* West had publicly withdrawn from the campaign. He withdrew after the media unearthed a headline story from 1996 that described how he had taken his clothes off, took part in naked body painting and swam in-the-buff during an environmental youth conference at a lakeside camp west of Lake Cowichan. Though many knew the NDP candidate had quit weeks earlier, it was too late to have his name officially removed from the ballot and 3,700



source or the person or persons who actually made the calls."

Still, many question the thoroughness of the investigation. "Had anything of this kind taken place in Haiti, a place where Canada sends international observers to ensure fair elections, a new round of voting would likely have been ordered. But when it comes to Saanich-Gulf Islands, a less rigorous standard seems to apply," said a former resident of the riding.

But bogus robo-calls aren't the only allegation of dirty tricks committed by Gary Lunn's campaign.

While his campaign spent close to its legal limit, what caught the eye of election watchers was the fact that five third party advertisers spent another \$15,000 on advertising endorsing Lunn. One of the groups, Citizens Against Higher Taxes, said it bought signs from Lunn's campaign co-manager Byng Giraud.

At the time, *The Tyee* reported the advertisers in question appeared to have close links to Lunn's team. Four of the groups shared the same financial agent and were registered out of the office of lawyer Bruce Hallsor. At the time, Hallsor was vice-president of the Conservative's Saanich-Gulf Islands riding association. He is also a long time Conservative organizer federally, a former Canadian Alliance Party candidate and a provincial Liberal.

Another was registered under the name of Patricia Trottier, whose husband is Gwyn Morgan, the former president and CEO of EnCana Corporation and a former fundraiser for the Canadian Alliance and Conservative parties. [Liberal candidate] Penn said her campaign workers saw people from Lunn's team with a pick-up truck carrying signs from one of the supposed third-party groups. "It couldn't have been more obvious," she said. "It's breaking the law and yet there's no recourse... There's no following up and enforcing the law." That failure to act will just make people more cynical about elections and politicians, she said. "What's the logical conclusion of this? It's scary. This is how democracy is eroded."

When the NDP raised questions about the matter in the House of Commons, Conservative MP James Moore insisted, "The member involved has always respected the campaign finance laws in this country in the past and always will in the future." In an interview, the NDP MP who asked the question, Bill Siksay, observed, "It seems to be an attempt to manipulate the election law in terms of the amount of money that can be spent on a campaign... It sure doesn't seem right."

"There's a lot of concern about the number of what generally gets referred to as dirty tricks in the 2008 election," said May, who looked at the matter while researching her book *Losing Confidence* about the threats to Canadian democracy. "Saanich-Gulf Islands appeared to be the riding in Canada that had the highest percentage of dirty tricks."

While the federal election regulator said it was keeping a file open on dubious third-party advertising in the riding, no further actions have been taken. As one Liberal Party official put it in a recent email, "The irregularities are certainly on Elections Canada's radar and they've chosen not to pursue them further. I don't feel like justice was served on the phone call issue or the third-party business."

A call to Lunn's campaign office seeking comment for this story went unreturned. In the absence of a full investigation, it is hard to say for certain who was behind the dirty tricks in Saanich-Gulf Islands, May said. "It's clear who benefitted from them, but it's a long way from saying who committed them."

According to May, the people working on her team are watching Lunn's campaign closely and are ready to cry foul if necessary. Early in the *continued p.31...*



It will be up to voters in Saanich-Gulf Islands whether to reward fair play or not.

people voted for him anyway.

Recipients of the robo-calls who were equipped with caller display said the calls appeared to be coming from the NDP riding association president's phone, who insists neither he nor anyone else associated with the NDP campaign had any part in making them. A Telus spokesperson confirmed that "spoofing" the caller ID system was possible, a practice that would conceal the call's true source. Since the practice is legal in Canada, there was nothing the company could do, he said.

As might be expected, the response infuriated many Saanich-Gulf Islands residents who believe the calls had a significant impact on the final voting outcome. If you recall, Lunn only won by 2,625 votes and the 3,700 votes cast for Julian West would likely have made all the difference. Lunn also had the most to gain by having someone make the bogus calls. A representative from Lunn's campaign went on record at the time saying they weren't responsible for the calls.

In its subsequent investigation into the question, Elections Canada stated it had "... found no one who had actually been influenced in their vote because of the purported telephone call, nor was he [the Elections Canada representative] able to identify the



Joyce Murray, Liberal candidate Vancouver Quadra

Contempt destroys character

After May 2nd, one of two people will be Prime Minister: Stephen Harper or Michael Ignatieff. As a Liberal candidate, it is my task to highlight the stark contrast between the inclusive, family-oriented vision of Canada offered by the Liberal Party versus the dangerous ideological control of the Harper Conservatives.

On spending priorities, these differences could not be clearer: the Liberals would cancel Stephen Harper's expensive jets, prisons and corporate tax cuts and redirect those big dollar investments towards education, health care, and growing our green economy.

But these differences go much deeper. Canada has never seen a government with so little respect for the core principles of democracy, which give all citizens a voice in the political decisions that affect their daily lives.



The Liberals would cancel Stephen Harper's expensive jets, prisons and corporate tax cuts and redirect those big dollar investments towards education, health care, and growing our green economy.

Stephen Harper deliberately misled Parliament and deceived Canadians about the true cost of the F-35 stealth fighter jets and prison expansions. The Speaker of the House confirmed Harper's contempt of Parliament on both counts, the first of such rulings in the history of all 54 Commonwealth democracies. Harper (contemptuously) tried to make "contempt of Parliament" sound like a bureaucratic technical term, but what it actually means is contempt not only for the democratic process, but also for each and every Canadian citizen.

The contempt ruling was not just a 'one off'; it was a response to the Harper government's deliberate misinformation of Parliament – also known as lying – on multiple fronts. Harper has refused to be accountable to independent officers of Parliament and muzzled civil servants and his own candidates and ministers. He has also smeared, sidelined or fired those who did not toe the 'Harper Government line.' Not surprisingly, his own 'public' election campaign events had Conservative troops obsessively track (creeping) voters on Facebook, enlisting the RCMP to throw out curious young people associated, even distantly, with the Liberals.

Soliciting the RCMP, however, does not mean the Conservatives are accountable to the law. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Four members of Harper's inner circle face criminal charges relating to the Conservative 2006 "in and out" scandal and several of his Senate appointees also face criminal charges. Most recently, Stephen Harper's Conservatives were criticized in an Auditor General's draft report for illegally siphoning money, supposedly designated for border security, into a \$50 million G8 slush fund for vanity projects in a minister's riding.

This election offers two options for voters that are more deeply divergent than most people realize. If Stephen Harper returns as Prime Minister, he will further his efforts to eliminate access to safe injection sites, a measure that saves lives every day in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Four out of the nine Supreme Court Justices reach mandatory retirement age within the next *continued p.34...*

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Are the **tables** about to turn on **Hedy Fry?**


Voters planning to cast a strategic vote in Vancouver Centre apparently no longer need worry about voting for Liberal Hedy Fry just to stop the Conservative candidate from winning. It seems a Liberal-insider associated with Hedy Fry's team told Green candidate Adriane Carr about the results of a recent internal poll conducted in Vancouver Centre by the Liberal Party. Normally, information of this kind is kept a closely guarded secret.

According to Carr, while the poll found Hedy Fry to be in the lead, surprisingly, it found the Green Party candidate in a close second, catapulting her up from fourth from the very tight second, third and fourth grouping of the 2008 election. Conservative Party candidate Jennifer Clarke, a no show at the West End Community's all-candidate's meeting on Sunday, April 17th, had fallen back into third place from the Conservative Party's second place placing in 2008. NDP candidate, Karen Shillington, trailed a distant fourth, down from the NDP's third place finish in 2008.*

There is a strong likelihood the leaked polling information is correct. Unlike previous elections, in this one, both the NDP and the Conservative Party are running relatively weak unknown candidates in the downtown riding. Clarke replaced the Conservative party's former rising-star candidate Rachel Greenfeld, who resigned in February after she declined to commit to running a second time if she was defeated by Hedy Fry.** In comparison, Adriane Carr, deputy leader of Canada's Green Party, is much better known in the riding and liked by many for her personable qualities.

What's more curious however is the fact that Adriane Carr was shown such information at all. Is all well in "Club Hedy"? Speculations aside, what matters more is that the internal poll suggests that, after 18 long years, Hedy Fry's appeal may be waning. If so, the implications could prove interesting for voters, especially when it comes to the pro-strategic voting messaging the Liberal Party loves to promote. Why? Because if Adriane Carr is in second place, which seems likely, the rationale for voting for nobody other than a Liberal in Vancouver Centre just to stop Stephen Harper no longer applies.

Now, in an unexpected turning of the tables, those who don't much care for Hedy Fry – or the Liberal Party or its leader Michael Ignatieff – can vote strategically for the Green Party, with no worry a Conservative might get in. What's even more ironic is that small "c" Conservative-leaning voters, annoyed with Rachel Greenfeld's pressured departure, might vote strategically for the Green candidate this time around, if that's what it takes to knock Hedy out of the game to open things up in the next election.

Either way, if Adriane Carr is elected, the residents of Vancouver Centre will make political history simply for the fact of electing what could be Canada's first Green Party MP. 

*For more about the race in Vancouver Centre, see the **Georgia Straight** article: www.straight.com/article-383562/vancouver/former-green-candidate-karen-shillington-seeks-ndp-nomination-vancouver-centre

** For more about Rachel Greenfield's resignation as the riding's Conservative candidate see: www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/story/2011/03/15/pol-bc-conservative-candidate-cp.html

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DRUG BUST Alan Cassels

HEALTH

Harper vs health

protection from dangerous drugs hangs by a thread

Electing a government may be about a lot of things, but what seems to dominate the speeches of candidates is how they plan to spend our tax dollars. Those decisions determine our priorities and shape what kind of country we'll have now and in the future so whatever underpins those priorities is worthy of some careful thought. After nearly a month of political campaigning, I can only discern one distinct refrain in the various Harper pronouncements: fear. When the PM says, as he does in his broken-record way, "Let me be perfectly clear," he is about to remind us, once again, that the world is a big, fearful place and that the government's main job is to make us safe.

Fear is the backdrop to the "tough-on-crime" prison-building, border-tightening, fighter-jet procuring policies of the Harperites. In a manner similar to a simplistic, US Republican way of thinking, Harper's platform makes you think that axing the entire civil service and shovelling tax cuts to corporations are our two tickets to paradise. And there are a lot of people who support that view. I wonder, however, if those who are scared of the big, fearful things in the world – criminals and terrorists – ever stopped to think deeply about how the likelihood of those harms compare with a whole range of other dangers?

This question arose for me last week when I read a new US report that stated almost two million patients per year were being injured, some fatally, by adverse drug reactions in US hospitals, a figure that has grown by 54 percent between 2004 and 2008. In Canada, we know the prescription drug death toll is proportionately similar and growing. It translates to about 200,000 Canadians hurt every year by hospital-administered medicine. Most of us think going to a hospital will improve our chances of survival if we're very sick, but there is a growing reality it can also be a dangerous experience that may end in death and governments are doing practically nothing to protect us.

Let's consider something a little closer to home: your kitchen. Imagine a world in which you could never eat your breakfast in peace without the threat that, at any moment, your toaster could explode in your face. Or that the sausages you're eating may be contaminated or your water may be laced with disease-causing pathogens. It's hard to imagine that world because behind the consumer products we use every-day there are people who test and regulate them and identify problems when they arise and inform people how to avoid potential danger. They are, of course, undermanned, undergunned and probably underpaid, but they perform an essential, and some would say lifesaving, public service.

Some people think it is only the invisible hand of the market that ensures products are safe in the hands of consumers and that those businesses selling exploding toasters would not be commercially viable for long. They think government just needs to 'get out of the way' of the market and allow it to work unfettered by intrusive regulations. The opposite view holds it is not the invisible hand of the market, but rather the invisible hands of regulators and regulatory systems that work everyday behind the scenes to ensure our toasters don't explode. Without regulators monitoring the safety of consumer products, drugs and food, our lives are just a little bit more endangered.

Regulation is vital, but beyond the immediate actions of regulators is a much more important terrain: it is where a whole bunch of people from what is called "civil society" work to keep governments and corporations accountable. Without the actions of non-profit groups of patients, activists and advocates who keep an eye on the erosion of rights, while also challenging the business-friendly, profit-at-all-costs ethic of politicians, we'd never be able to protect the rights of Canadians. Nor would we be able to ensure they are not exposed to excessive dangers from the marketplace.

So how's the state of civil society in Canada? In a nutshell, terrible and getting worse – especially since the Conservatives have been running things. Don't believe me? Maybe listen to those people who make up civil society, those who have concrete evidence of the myriad ways our democracy in Canada is being debased, defunded and eroded. Voices-voix (voices-voix.ca) is a huge, non-partisan collection of "organizations and individuals defending democracy, free speech and transparency in Canada." Its website contains some shocking examples of what the Harper government has been silently enacting, including cutting off funding of groups that provide those essential services which the invisible hand of the market can't provide, such as protecting women's and immigrants' rights, international aid and so on. What does this have to do with the election? The Prime Minister said he'd fund his government's vision with \$11 billion worth of savings made from "efficiencies" within the federal government. Pray tell, what does that mean?

No one seems to know, but in the televised leader's debate, NDP leader Jack Layton was the only one who delivered any insight when he asked (I'm paraphrasing here) if the \$11 billion in savings was going to come through laying off food inspectors? It isn't at all clear where one can find an easy \$11 billion worth of cuts, but we can be reasonably assured the easy targets are the regulatory people and the laws they protect. After all, what better way to save money than by feeding federal consumer product testers and drug evaluation and medical device regulators into the maw of the downsizing mill?

If you think Canada already has robust ways of keeping unsafe drugs and dangerous toasters out of the hands of Canadians, you've obviously never heard of Vioxx, the biggest prescription drug disaster in our lifetime, which could have easily been prevented with proper government oversight of the evaluation, sale and marketing of pharmaceuticals.

How's the state of civil society in Canada? In a nutshell, terrible and getting worse – especially since the Conservatives have been running things.

A few years ago, Canada's Auditor General did a report on Health Canada's activities around the medical device industry. These are the developers and marketers of heart and hip implants, lasers, blood test kits, complex medical imaging machines and home use glucose monitors, among many other things. The report essentially stated Health Canada carried out very little testing of products after they had come on the market; it communicated inadequately with consumers when they found shoddy goods; and it didn't even have a strategy to communicate risks of medical devices. The key recommendation? More funding so Health Canada could properly regulate medical devices and keep Canadians safe.

You can imagine how much extra money our health regulators got since the Harper Government has been slashing and burning the public service and the civil society actors who endeavour to keep government accountable. If you are feeling safer now, you should know that discretionary money is financing prisons and jets instead of the federal bureaucrats who oversee complicated medical devices and tests, verify to see if there is lead in your baby's teether or salmonella in your cabbage. And you are likely deluding yourself. Scary stuff indeed.

Right now, we've got a government that answers every question with a corporate tax cut. And to fund its agenda of fear, we need "efficiencies" created by cutting federal jobs and programs and getting rid of those invisible hands representing thousands of public servants and civil society groups whose job it is to keep our food, water and health care safe and who protect and uphold our laws. What do we think of this? I give the last word to my friend Wendy Armstrong of Edmonton, one of the strongest voices for consumer protection in Canada. She says we are getting what we pay for. "The cost of regulating, overseeing and challenging the activities [of industries] in order to ensure the health and safety of Canadian consumers, workers, and the public at large, is a critical element in any market economy. In the end, we all pay for regulatory failures... just ask the Japanese." ◀

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. Read more of what he's writing about at www.alancassels.com

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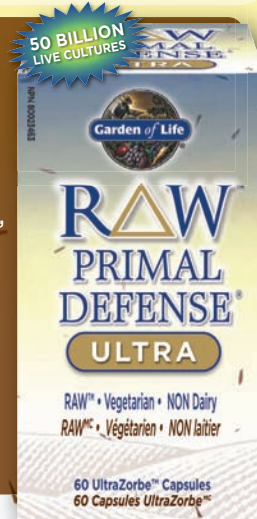
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Planting the garden

On the Garden Path Carolyn Herriot

ORGANICS



When establishing a new garden, rototilling (or deep digging) is needed to initially incorporate organic amendments, but once the garden is established, there should be no need to cultivate deeply, which would destroy the soil food web. If soil becomes compacted, it may be necessary to turn soil amendments under with a light forking, but mulches of compost, leaves, seaweed or manure will generally break down readily in established beds, without having to be turned under.

When starting a new garden, if soil fertility is in question or when revitalizing soil, organic fertilizer blends are useful. Nutrients in natural-source fertilizers are released slowly to plants as they grow. Once good soil fertility is established, there should be no need to apply these soil 'supplements.'

After heavy winter rains, it's best to lime except in areas where acid-loving plants such as blueberries, strawberries and potatoes, grow. Dolomite lime adds calcium and magnesium and keeps soil in the neutral pH range favoured by most food plants.

Cool-weather vegetables: globe artichokes, lettuces, cress, chard, coriander, radishes, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, kale, spinach,

orach, arugula, beets, peas, onions, leeks, summer mesclun mixes (baby salad greens) and oriental greens are the first to get planted in the season.

Heat lovers: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, basil, dill, amaranth, quinoa, corn, squash and beans cannot go outdoors until the soil has warmed up.

Winter vegetables: lettuce, cress, chard, coriander, favas, radishes, cauliflower, broccoli, winter cabbage, kale, spinach, orach, arugula, beets, onions, winter mesclun mixes, mustards and oriental greens are seeded from June to the end of August.

Root crops: carrots, turnips, parsnips, beets, kohlrabi and celeriac can be direct-seeded in late spring once the soil begins to warm; they will not germinate until it has.

Hardening off

When planting seedlings, don't just throw your 'green babies' from under cover out into the cold. To avoid shock, they need to be hardened-off to gradually acclimatize to much cooler growing conditions. Harden young plants off for a week to 10 days by moving them outside during the day and back inside at night (or at least protect them from frost.) Tip: Squash and artichoke seedlings resent disturbance. Grow them

in their own individual pots and wait until the soil is well and truly warmed up before transplanting the seedlings outdoors.

Crop rotations

Crop rotation is a pillar of organic gardening because it significantly reduces the build-up of pest and disease problems that affect specific families of plants. It's very straightforward; just don't plant the same species of plants that are members of the same family in the same place. Tip: Keep empty seed packets handy for reference and map plants onto a garden plan. Referring to a garden map makes crop rotations a snap. Even easier is leaving plant markers in place until you plant the following crop.

Isolation distances for seed saving

Self-pollinators: Tomatoes peppers and eggplants 6 feet / Tomatoes (potato-leaf varieties) 30 feet / Lettuces 10 feet / Bush beans 10 feet / Pole beans 30 feet.

Biennial root crops: Beets, carrots, celeriac, leeks, onions, parsnips, radishes and turnips 1/4 mile. (Carrots cross with wild carrot '*Queen Anne's Lace*' if grown within 1/4 mile).

Brassicas: Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, collards, kale and kohlrabi 1/4 mile.

Squash: 1/4 mile. 

Carolyn Herriot is author of **The Zero-Mile Diet: A Year-Round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing). She is a food security consultant and grows 'Seeds of Victoria' at The Garden Path Centre in Victoria, BC. <http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath/>



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With Preet Marwaha

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Plant families

- **Apiaceae:** carrots, celeriac, celery, parsnips, parsley
- **Asteraceae:** lettuce, endive, chicory, salsify
- **Chenopodiaceae:** spinach, chard, beets
- **Brassicaceae:** cabbages, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, radish, turnips, rutabagas, arugula, kohlrabi, mustard
- **Cucurbitaceae:** squash, cucumber, melons, gourds
- **Fabaceae:** beans, favas, peas, soybean, chickpeas, lentils, lima beans
- **Liliaceae:** onions, leeks, shallots, scallions and garlic
- **Solanaceae:** tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, potatoes
- **Poaceae:** corn



My two-week water diet

I recently underwent a fascinating, life-altering three weeks. For two of those weeks, my diet consisted of bread and water – without the bread. And I am not someone who has experienced anorexia. Quite the contrary – I was drawn to the field of nutrition because of my love for food (nutritious or not) and snacking has been a recurrent downfall.

But fate flung at me an inflammatory sports-related condition called *plantar fasciitis*, which made walking almost impossible. I saw that an inability to walk would lead to decreased fitness, increased weight gain and perhaps even type 2 diabetes and related problems, not to mention a reduced overall quality of life.

So I was ready to take a chance, but with powerful safeguards. I knew and trusted the medical staff that would support me through a water-only fast. I understood a little of the science behind their work. The clinic I attended is the only one I know that offers water fasting *with* vigilant supervision by MDs and other medical staff (plus it is economical). Their success with hypertension, type 2 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis is impressive and they currently have a research grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Withdrawing from the world while resting your mind, body and digestive system is an age-old technique with roots in the healing traditions of ayurveda, ancient Greece and many western and eastern religions. A remarkable number of spiritual leaders underwent fasts for as long as 40 days.

My water fast was for 14 days, followed by a week of re-feeding. During this time, I learned the following:

1. I strongly advise against doing a water fast for more than a day without supervision by an experienced MD.

2. Water fasting is quite distinct from juice or maple syrup-based fasts, in which a stream of sugar fuels the body and brain. In water fasting, the body breaks down fat and soon goes into a state of ketosis. Fasting (where you lose fat) is not the same as starving (where fat is gone and muscle and body protein are lost).

3. A typical weight loss is one pound per day, primarily fat. A few pounds, due to salt and intestinal contents, are regained during re-feeding, yet with proper follow-up the weight stays off. I met two happy individuals who had lost over 80 pounds in a series of fasts.

4. People had come from across Canada, the US and Europe. For some, symptoms of type 2 diabetes had disappeared within a few weeks on water. For others, the pain, stiffness and inflammation of rheumatoid arthritis faded as possible trigger foods were removed from their diets. In a study of 168 patients with blood pressure above 140/90 mm Hg, the average reduction was 37/13 mm Hg after 2 weeks on water plus six days of re-feeding. All those on hypertensive medications discontinued their meds (see references at www.commonground.ca). Read some stories at www.healthpromoting.com

5. The re-feeding began with juice, followed by a plant-based diet with no added SOS (salt, oil, sugar). Meals consist of steamed greens, soups, yams, a salad bar and fruit. After two weeks of water fasting, one's sense of taste changes. Addictive attachments to SOS can be replaced by healthier eating habits.

6. To my surprise, doing without food was not hard – it was relaxing. I returned home 12 pounds lighter and followed up with very effective chiropractic treatment in BC. Best of all, the experience was healing. ☑

Vesanto Melina is co-author of classic nutrition books including **Becoming Raw**, **Becoming Vegan** and **Becoming Vegetarian**. www.nutrispeak.com



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StarWise

May 2011

Between the poles of the conscious and the unconscious, there has the mind made a swing: thereon hang all beings and all worlds and that swing never ceases its sway. Millions of beings are there: the sun and the moon in their courses are there: millions of ages pass and the swing goes on. All swing! The sky and the earth and the air and the water and the Lord Himself taking form: and the sight of this has made Kabir a servant.

Sant Kabir's words take my breath away. His poem puts things into perspective and brings us to the realization that whatever our present day troubles and concerns are, they are fleeting ripples in the sands of time. As the great poet William Blake penned, "Eternity is ever in love with the products of time."

We won't be able to measure the impact of the radioactive material being dumped into the ocean for a while, but we do know the outcome cannot be good. It may very well change the course of our lives and the planetary indicators are saying the same thing.



ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19

Aries is known as the knight that jumped on his charger and went off in all directions at the same time. Choose a direction and follow your passion. By that effort alone, all kinds of great and lucky breaks will come your way.



TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21

When you're standing in gasoline up to your knees, it doesn't matter who lights the first match. The month of May is destined to be hot, possibly very hot. Romance, excitement, action and attraction along with some danger take place. Embrace it all carefully.



GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20

Lord Mercury and lovely Venus hold hands throughout the month bringing untold pleasures and mysteries for your indulgence. It just gets better in June. Time with friends and family and doing what you love fill the days. Spring is in the air.



CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22

Your solar career sector is heating up and it will serve you well to put a few irons in the fire. If one gets hot, you're on your way. Friends, groups and associations feature throughout the month. Special lifetime connections are made.



LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22

You are a fixed fire sign indicating you have great will and determination. Dynamic challenges in the work place arise throughout the month and you may find you have your sleeves rolled up and going hard it. Internal work calls out for attention.



VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22

Journeys of inner discoveries and/or travel to the far horizon take place. Inheritances, joint monies and investments are topics of interest. A very productive time has arrived in which you can achieve your goals or at least be well on your way.

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Gwen Randall-Young
Internationally Published Writer
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Regardless of how much we acquire, it is never enough. Greed, lust, anger, ego and pride trip us up all along the way. Soon, we will grow weary and we will have had enough of this hectic and stressful lifestyle. Neptune has just commenced his 15-year journey through his own sign Pisces and is a harbinger of a spiritual awakening. The negative connotation is within the realm of any form of escapism, such as drugs and other forms of addictions. The positive side of this Neptune transit is that it will open our eyes and hearts to humanity's sufferings. Our yearning for peace and love will increase and we will long for the day in which we rest our head in the lap of the creator. We have all the technology in the world to stay in touch with each other, yet we confoundedly fail miserably at it. We have not figured out or come to the realization that we are one people on one planet. Instead, we continue sabre rattling, strutting and showing off our powers to annihilate one another. Well, we sure showed those guys, didn't we?

The short of it is there will be no rest and then we're put to rest and the cycle of awagawan continues throughout time. Awagawan is a term describing the transmigration of the souls through the myriad 8,400,000 species, called the cycle of "84." Only love will do. 



LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22

Your solar seventh house of partnerships is very activated in the first half of May. Out with the old and in with the new may be the mantra of the times. Life's mysteries deepen in the second half of the month. Go with the flow.



SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21

Powerful days and powerful plays take place. It is a time of contrast and opposition. This may not be a bad thing and it could spur you on to greater achievements. The full moon on May 17 will illuminate the areas of resistance and static.



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21

A very dynamic month unfolds. Courage and confidence get a boost. Doors open that were previously shut tight. Make the best of it and lead the way in true Sagittarius style. The last half of the month is spent working out the details.



CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19

A great churning motion is taking place and many challenges and changes lay ahead. Lord Saturn features prominently in this month's new moon on May 2. Dynamic scenarios which call for action take place. Your wisdom, dedication, determination and grit are needed.



AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19

Connecting and communicating with others feature big in the spirit of Aquarius. An enhanced time of communications has emerged and one way or the other, you may capture the attention of many souls.



PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20

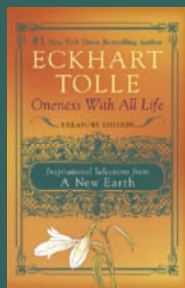
Lord Neptune's 15-year visit through Pisces will have a great transformative effect on all those that inhabit the Earth plane. Life will morph into hopefully higher vibrations in which we long for a deeper spiritual existence. Fortunately, you are wired right and will flower in your own unique way.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109

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an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film *A Beautiful Mind*, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of *A New Earth*?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. *cont'd pg 24...*



Universe Within Gwen Randall-Young

Transcending dysfunction

Healing may not be so much about getting better, as about letting go of everything that isn't you – all of the expectations, all of the beliefs – and becoming who you are. – Rachel Naomi Remen

Sometimes it is hard to understand why we, or anyone, would stay in a dysfunctional relationship. Often, we see patterns repeating, as when one gets out of one abusive relationship and into another. There is also the pattern where a parent was an alcoholic and the child grows up and marries an alcoholic, ultimately divorces, only to get involved with another alcoholic.

On the surface, this isn't very smart and the pattern seems so obvious that it should be easy to avoid. However, it has nothing to do with intelligence. Even the brightest, most aware and competent individuals fall into the trap.

When we remain in situations that are not good for us and make no sense, we can be sure that unconscious patterns, drives or beliefs are "corrupting" our "operating system." One who was verbally abused as a child may, deep down, feel unworthy or undeserving of being treated with respect. The adult child of an alcoholic parent who was unpredictable or emotionally volatile may put up with similar behaviours in a partner because it is familiar. The man who had a domineering and controlling mother or the woman who had an uncommunicative and distant father may be re-living these dynamics with a partner because they think this is just how men/women are.

Those who had a dysfunctional childhood may tend to stay in dysfunctional adult relationships much longer than is healthy, continuing to hope, as they did in

The adult dysfunctional relationship is an opportunity
for the inner child to partner with the wise adult and
stand up for himself.

childhood, that one day things will be better. Yet it does not get better and so daily adult life is a struggle, just as life was a struggle for the child. The struggle and suffering continue and become "the story of my life."

We do, however, have the power to change the story, but it does not start with trying to change the other person. It must begin with establishing a positive and more respectful relationship with oneself. It requires us to develop the ability to be the wise, loving, nurturing supportive parent to our own inner child. It is not the wise adult who keeps us stuck; it is the vulnerable inner child.

Together they can say, "Been there, done that and I don't want to do it anymore. I won't do it anymore."

If you recognize this is your pattern and you want to change it, your first loyalty has to be to your own health and well-being. Experiencing relationship stress most of the time or having poor self-esteem and reduced self-confidence *and not doing anything about it* is not honouring yourself.

The true coming-of-age in these situations is when you may not know what else is out there or what the future will hold and you may even be scared, but you gather up all of your strength and courage and take yourself away from the person or situation that is not good for you. In this way, you begin to break the pattern that has kept you stuck and give yourself the opportunity to have the life you deserve. **K**

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue.

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Every individual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived

from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works...

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the Tao Te Ching starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form. ☒

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.

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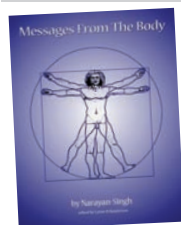


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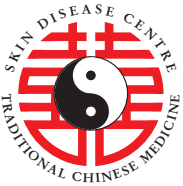
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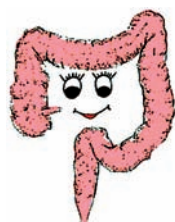
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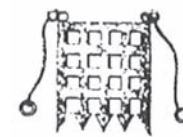
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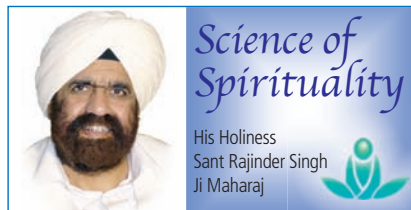
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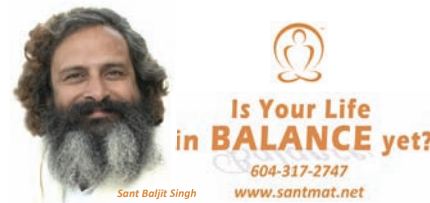
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...Lunn vs May from pg. 12

campaign, there were concerns that a taxpayer-funded mail-out from Lunn arrived in mailboxes in the riding after the election was called, but Lunn said they were mailed before the writ was dropped so there was little the Greens could do, May said.

Meanwhile, May said she is focussed on running a clean campaign and believes she can win. Polls have put her within a couple of percentage points of Lunn and she noted there are voters she'll draw that Penn couldn't last time. "There's quite a lot of Conservatives who've decided they're going to send me to Ottawa and see if I can make a difference."

Many conservative voters are frustrated with a party that used to say it stood for ethics in politics but seems to have adopted a "culture of win at any cost" where ruthlessness

may trump restraint, she said.

Adding to that impression is the fact four key Tories, including two sitting senators, were charged in February for "wilfully" exceeding campaign spending limits as part of the "in and out" scheme in the 2006 election. Party officials were alleged to have improperly reported the expenses of 67 Conservative candidates, allowing the party to exceed the national advertising spending limit and to claim taxpayer-funded payback for expenses that had never actually been incurred. One such official, Raymond Lavigne, has since been found guilty in federal court and resigned his senate seat as a result.

And for those thinking such dirty tricks couldn't happen again, Liberal candidate Joe Volpe said in the middle of this current campaign his supporters were getting harass-

ing calls in his Toronto riding from a North Dakota phone number. A Volpe campaign worker reportedly swore an affidavit saying a caller admitted to working for the Conservatives, but the party has said they knew nothing about the calls and weren't behind them.

That leaves candidates like May, who are in tight races against Conservatives, wondering what to expect. "You can't prepare for something that might never have been done in the last campaign," May said. "All you can do is do your best to stay on the high road yourself."

It will be up to voters in Saanich-Gulf Islands whether to reward fair play or not.

Andrew MacLeod reports for TheTyee.ca website from Victoria.

Fair Trade **on the move** in Vancouver



Poverty Gorilla chases FairTrade bananas at the 2011 Vancouver Sun Run. Photo courtesy of FairTrade Vancouver.

Global trade in the 21st century is a continuous negotiation between people, governments, corporations and international law and its success rests upon being able to satisfy the interests of all players. The food we eat and the everyday products we use possess a global footprint. Cocoa is harvested in West Africa. Tea and cotton are predominately grown in South Asia. Coffee plantations are located in Latin America, while sugar is imported from the Caribbean. It might also be surprising to note the majority of minerals – diamonds, gold, silver, copper and tin – are located in these very same regions. Moreover, tropical fruit, spices and rubber are sourced from much warmer climates.

The impact of our consumption is reflected upon global markets. Worldwide stocks of

goods – particularly food commodities – are dependent upon favourable growing conditions and, in turn, world prices rise and fall as a result of droughts, floods, crop diseases and soil erosion, all of which are being exacerbated by climate change.


To further complicate matters, producers in developing countries are facing incredible hardship in exporting their goods into European and North American markets because they are faced with steep tariffs and import quotas on agricultural goods. Additionally, the US and the European Union are subsidizing their own industries and selling products below world prices (known as dumping) to developing countries. Dumping is so widespread that Ghana imports American rice in spite of being able to produce enough to feed its entire population.

These tactics undertaken by wealthier nations is much different from the vision of free trade that was conceived by philosophers like George Whatley, Adam Smith and David Ricardo. The trading system we are exposed to today is highly protectionist, as the sales of conventional foodstuffs and raw materials are dominated by just a handful of transnational corporations and their subsidiaries in developing regions. Low corporate tax rates, incentives, loopholes, subsidies and bailouts from governments support these institutions and perpetuate their grasp on commerce.

Fair Trade creates another way of doing business with developing countries by guaranteeing liveable wages for producers, encouraging community economic development in growing regions and ensuring environmentally sustainable practices. This movement is widespread and a vibrant Fair Trade community is growing in Vancouver.

On May 6, 2010, Vancouver became Canada's first Fair Trade City, in which city councillors committed to purchasing "Fair Trade Certified" goods in all its municipal buildings. Vancouver is creating quite a stir, as major cities like Montreal, Ottawa and Edmonton are following its lead and launching their own Fair Trade campaigns.

Recently, UBC became Canada's first Fair Trade University where all university food service providers switched to offering Fair Trade coffee provided by Ethical Bean and Milano. Additionally, Fair Trade tea and chocolate options are available at all university retailers. This switch culminates nearly a decade of awareness campaigns and is sending a signal to universities across the country to become Fair Trade campuses.

Vancouver is embarking upon a strategy to harmonize its ethical procurement guidelines with various authorities such as the Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Coastal Health. These authorities purchase significant quantities of coffee and tea and should these bodies convert to Fair Trade, it will significantly empower communities in developing countries. 



Sasha Caldera is a co-founder of Fair Trade Vancouver, a non-profit organization that is seeking to increase availability, awareness and sales of Fair Trade products in Metro Vancouver. www.fairtradevancouver.ca



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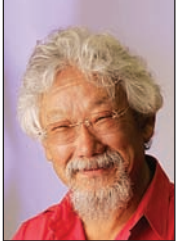
May 8 - Come out to Stanley Park for free Mother's Day roses.

Call Sasha for more info: 604-916-1861.

May 11 - Join Fair Trade Vancouver at Radha Yoga & Eatery (728 Main Street, Vancouver) for a free talk by a representative of a Bolivian coffee cooperative.

Call Sasha for details: 604-916-1861.

May 13-15 - Visit the Vancouver Fair Trade pavilion at the Epic Sustainable Living Expo, Vancouver Convention Centre. www.epicexpo.com



Star scientists

Hedy Lamarr was once regarded as the most beautiful woman in Hollywood. In 1933, she scandalously appeared nude in a Czech film called *Ecstasy*, which brought her to the attention of US movie moguls. Through the '30s, '40s and '50s, she starred in some of Hollywood's biggest hits alongside leading male celluloid idols like Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable. She was also a part-time rocket scientist. In fact, we have her to thank for some of the technology used in cell phones and the Internet.

In 1940, Ms. Lamarr and *avant-garde* music composer George Antheil devised and patented a communications system based on frequency hopping for use in radio-guided torpedoes. Their invention was inspired by player piano rolls – spools of paper with holes that “told” automatic pianos which notes to play. Frequency hopping is now used in much of our wireless communications technology.

Because the invention was long classified as top secret, her contribution wasn't recognized for years and many people were surprised to learn that a glamorous star could also have a brilliant scientific mind.

Why should we be surprised? Are you surprised to learn that, during high school, Oscar winner Natalie Portman was a straight-A student and semi-finalist in the rigorous Intel Science Talent Search for her investigation into an environmentally friendly way to convert waste into energy and that she went on to study neuroscience and the evolution of the mind at Harvard? During her studies, she still found time to act in a string of major movies.

According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, Ms. Portman and Ms. Lamarr are not alone. Danica McKellar had roles in shows including *The Wonder Years*, *The West Wing* and *NYPD Blue*. As a math student at the University of California, Los Angeles, she also helped come up with a mathematical theorem that was named after her and her collaborators.

Mayim Bialik, who stars as neurobiologist Amy Farrah Fowler in the popular TV show *The Big Bang Theory*, is actually a neurobiologist, with a PhD from UCLA. She also played the lead role in the '90s TV show *Blossom*.

This isn't about overachieving stars. Rather, it's a way of pointing out that science isn't just for geeky nerds – and it isn't just for guys. But it also says something about western society's obsession with celebrity and its lack of interest in science. We pay far more attention to these people for their movie roles and stardom than for their intellectual accomplishments.

Contrary to what endless columns in newspapers and magazines or minutes of broadcast time would lead you to believe, celebrity, sports, business and politics are not the most important issues. The reality is that the most powerful force shaping our lives today is science, whether it's in industry, medicine or the military. We cannot control the ideas and inventions unleashed by science if we, as a society, are scientifically illiterate.

We elect our politicians to represent us and lead us into the future and they must make decisions to deal with climate change, overpopulation, endocrine disrupters, stem cells, cloning, genetically modified organisms, toxic pollution, deforestation and a host of other issues that require some understanding of science.

The lesson we should take from people like Ms. Portman, who also created an environmental video in her childhood, is that it's fine to be entertained and to entertain, but that shouldn't preclude us from taking an interest in the world around us and in the science that shapes so much of our place in that world and that helps us to understand it.

We can't all be scientists, just as we can't all be movie stars, but we can take the time to learn more about science and its application in understanding and solving some of the challenges we face in the modern world.

I've only had one small role in a short, fictional film and I can tell you it's tedious work. I'd much rather be a scientist. But I'm glad there are movie stars who are interested in science. With so many poor role models in the movie business and in politics, it's refreshing to see some who are setting good examples. ◀

Written with contributions from **Ian Hanington**, communications and editorial specialist, David Suzuki Foundation. www.davidsuzuki.org

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ENVIROBITES

Mayday for wild salmon

Alexandra Morton echoes distress call

FOLLOWING REVELATIONS at the Cohen Inquiry that government suppressed information on critical viral infections in Fraser sockeye, the Get Out Migration marched on with 'Mayday for Wild Salmon.' In April, Alexandra Morton and the Wild Salmon People travelled to communities asking people to lead government by flying the flag for wild salmon with events in various communities and a May Day 24-hour vigil in Victoria on May 1 leading into Election Day on May 2.

'Mayday for Wild Salmon' will feature a Mother's Day blessing on May 8 and the Global Day of Action on May 17 as well as visits to the Cohen Inquiry, legal interventions, flotilla protests, swims around salmon farms and celebrations to honour coastal communities on the front line and the guardians of the spawning grounds.

"I'm calling the Wild Salmon People," said Alexandra Morton. "Government judg-



ment on fisheries is impaired. DFO is blindly following outdated policy that salmon farms are good for us, prompting senior scientists to state government is repeating the mistakes that robbed the east coast provinces of their Atlantic cod. We don't have to let wild Pacific salmon – a BC icon – go down on our watch. The public has a right to know if the Conservative Government has allowed Norwegian-owned salmon farms to release lethal salmon viruses into B.C. waters. "Salmon Are Sacred is calling on the Wild Salmon People to join digitally and in person in protecting wild salmon.

"Until salmon farms get out of BC's waters, every day is a mayday for wild salmon, said Anissa Reed, the creative genius behind Salmon Are Sacred. "Wild Pacific salmon are the backbone of the BC coast and the lifeblood of the Fraser River watershed. Yet the government is putting my family's future at risk by promoting the expansion of open net cage salmon farming..." The Wild Salmon People need to stand together to help lift

the sea lice burden off baby wild salmon smolts, as they run the gauntlet past dozens of disease-ridden farms. Please respond to our SOS by flying the flag for wild salmon in your community or joining us in person in Victoria on May Day (May 1).

Margo French of Takla Lake First Nation in the headwaters of the Driftwood River watershed said, "It is a critical time for wild salmon – the 2011 out-migration is the precious progeny of the 2009 run which was the lowest in recorded history and prompted the Cohen Inquiry. All our hard work as guardians of the headwaters will be in vain if sea lice and infectious diseases from salmon farms are allowed to decimate wild salmon."

For more info about 'Mayday for Wild Salmon,' see www.salmonaresacred.org A new film, Rise of the Salmon People premieres in May. Watch the trailer online: <http://www.rockethub.com/projects/1031-rise-of-the-salmon-people-the-movie>

Farmers and seed distributors sue Monsanto

In March, 60 family farmers, seed businesses and organic agricultural organizations in Canada and the US, including Mumm's Sprouting Seeds Ltd. of Parkside Saskatchewan, filed a lawsuit against Monsanto to challenge the chemical giant's patents on genetically modified (GM) seed. The plaintiffs were forced to sue pre-emptively to protect themselves from being accused of patent infringement should they ever become contaminated by Monsanto's GM seed.

The case, Organic Seed Growers & Trade Association, et al. v. Monsanto, was filed in federal district court in Manhattan. Plaintiffs in the suit represent a broad array of family farmers, small businesses and organizations from within the organic agriculture community in Canada and the US who are increasingly threatened by GM seed contamination despite their best efforts to avoid it. The plaintiff organizations have more than 270,000 members, including thousands of certified organic family farmers.

The risk of contamination is high and once GM seeds are released into the environment, they cannot be recalled or controlled. Canadian farmers are still suffering the consequences of market loss after the 2009 GM contamination of flax and organic canola was virtually erased as a crop for farmers in Canada due to GM contamination.

The suit is being filed at a critical crossroads in agricultural history as Monsanto's GM Roundup Ready herbicide tolerant alfalfa has recently been approved for planting in the US, though it has yet to be commercially introduced in Canada.

"Patents on living organisms should never have been permitted in the first place," says Lucy Sharratt of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. "Patents on gene sequences are facilitating extreme corporate control over seed."

From Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) www.cban.ca Support the moratorium on GM alfalfa. Take action at <http://www.cban.ca/alfalfa> Donate today to support the campaign. www.cban.ca/donate

...Character from pg. 13

four years, enabling a future Harper government to make deeper and more long-term ideological changes to the Canada we know and love through the Supreme Court. In 2008, the Harper government unilaterally appointed a Supreme Court judge, bypassing the normal consultation process of Parliamentary hearings. Harper has criticized Canadian judges as "activist" and yet it is these Liberal-appointed judges who have upheld the rights of universal health care, same-sex marriage, women's access to reproductive freedom and environmental preservation.

Michael Ignatieff offers a commitment to a clean tech economy, with environmental stewardship and energy efficiency driving economic prosperity – a clear alternative to the Harper Conservatives' abysmal environmental record. Currently, Canada's per-capita clean energy investments are only one-tenth of those in the

US, hurting jobs and the growing green economy. At the climate negotiations in Copenhagen, I witnessed the Harper Conservatives' obstruction of international progress on stopping climate warming, making Canada a global pariah – only Saudi Arabia's performance index of 60 developed nations is lower. Stephen Harper has weakened the Canadian environmental assessment process several times and muzzled several of Canada's key research scientists. While Michael Ignatieff will legislate the 40-year Liberal ban on North Coast tanker traffic, Harper will eliminate it entirely.

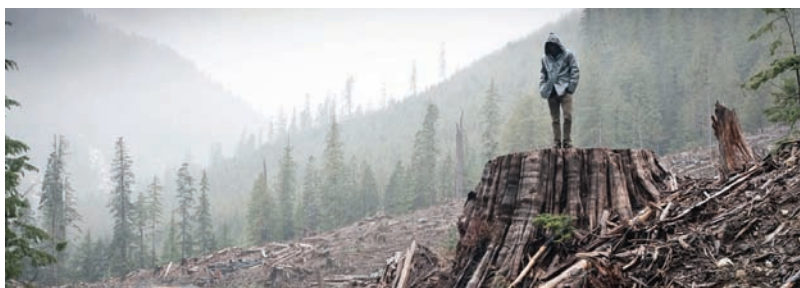
There are only two clear options. Consider the Liberal \$13 billion surplus of 2005, in comparison to the Conservative \$55 billion deficit of 2011. Consider the Liberal Party Family Reunification Immigration policy compared to the Conservative cut to annual family immigrant sponsorships from \$20,000 to \$11,000.

Consider the Liberal open-door policy to refugees and immigration compared to the Conservative immigration backlog with more than one million people waiting for a decision.

Vote strategically, riding by riding, to end the Harper government's secrecy, contempt and deceit – a threat to Canada's valuable democratic political culture. Only one party can lead Canada on the road not taken in the past five years. It will take a Liberal government to work cooperatively with the other parties to restore and preserve the just policies, open democracy and clean environment of our great country.

Joyce Murray represents the electoral district of Vancouver Quadra as a Liberal Member of the Canadian House of Commons and was previously a BC Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia from 2001 to 2005.

Doc May-hem



From *If a Tree Falls*. Courtesy DOXA Documentary Film Festival.

DOXA, Vancouver's purely documentary film festival, marks its 10th anniversary this year with 95 films showing between May 6 and 15, the festival's biggest program yet.


The festival opens with a film shadowing a group of Chicago area teens as they head for the world's largest youth slam poetry competition. Given the popularity of television talent shows, Jon Siskel and Greg Jacobs' ultra cool-sounding *Louder Than a Bomb* (6th, Park, 7pm) should have plenty of takers.

The closing film of the festival, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* comes from veteran documentarian Werner Herzog (14th, Park, 7pm). The pre-historic cave paintings of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc in France were discovered back in 1994, but few people have been allowed to view them. In what is a first for the festival, the film used 3D cameras to capture the contours and detail of the rarely viewed depictions of lions, panthers, bears, owls and hyenas while Herzog extrapolates in characteristic fashion from there.

As well as two special programs for youth, DOXA marks the 125th anniversary of Vancouver this year with *Spotlight on Vancouver*, a series of screenings depicting the changing face of the city. These include a retrospective of Allan King, featuring three half-hour glimpses into a Vancouver of some 50 years ago and First Nations shorts. Among the contemporary takes on the city, *The Hollow Tree* explores the symbolism of that ancient arboreal husk in Stanley Park and the struggle to "save" it after the 2006 storm. For really old images of Vancouver, check out *Magic Lantern Images of Vancouver*, a free presentation of Magic Lantern glass slides of the city between 1890 and 1940 (May 12, 5pm).

This is the second year that DOXA has featured its Justice Forum, with a strand of 11 feature films on human rights, each of which is followed by a discussion. Films include *Tears of Gaza*, which shows the plight of Palestinians following the bombing of Gaza between 2008 and 2009, the power struggle in Russia between the oligarchs, exemplified by the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Vladimir Putin's oppressive regime in *Vlast (Power)*. *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* asks how far should people go in defence of the environment through the stories of imprisoned "eco-terrorists" while *Raw Opium: Pain, Pleasure, Profits* examines the history, uses and economics behind the opium poppy.

Elsewhere, conventional notions about how we age are challenged in *Autumn Gold*, featuring 80-year-olds who take part in athletics competitions and in *Silver Girls*, with grandmothers working in the sex industry. The fascinating demise of Detroit is covered in *Detroit Wild City*, which looks at how, amidst the crumbling grandeur of its downtown and the collapse of its industry, a new type of home-steading is possibly taking root among the ruins. Shades of the post-industrial apocalypse are also discovered in *Darwin*, a film about a former thriving mining town reduced to 35 refugees from mainstream US society. In short, this year DOXA has a full and varied program with plenty to entice viewers.

The 2011 DOXA Festival takes place at the Vogue Theatre, Vancity Theatre, Pacific Cinémathèque, the Rio Theatre and Park Theatre. Single tickets are \$10 (\$20 for opening and closing films. Specials available). More details and trailers at www.doxafestival.ca. 

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary *You Never Bike Alone* www.youneverbikealone.com. He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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The Story of a Remarkable Life **May 10**

• **David Crow**
In Search of the Medicine Buddha: *Tibetan and Ayurvedic Medicine from a Master Herbalist* **May 13** (whistlerhealingarts.com)



• **Madhuri**—An Ayurvedic Yoga Practice: *DVD combines both practices* **May 26**

• **Samuel Avery**
Buddha and the Quantum: *All is Consciousness* **June 2**

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MAY TO JUNE

Yuen Method free demos May 13, Jun 10, Jun 17. See display ad pg. 17 for Crystaline Vision for locations. Level 1 Class May 14-15. Level 2 Class Jun 11-12. Level 3 Class Jun 18-19. www.crystallinevision.com
colette@crystallinevision.com 1-306-584-9135.

MAY 3-7

4th Mariachi Festival Canada. Nanaimo, May 3, Victoria, May 4, Courtenay May 5, Vancouver, May 7. More info: 604-338-4064.
www.mariachifestival.ca

MAY 6-8

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7.30 pm \$10; Course \$395. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

MAY 7 & JUN 5

Adam Dreamhealer's Workshops - Toronto: May 7; Calgary: June 5. Experience unique group energy healings with Adam, international speaker, Molecular Biologist, author and First Nations Healer. Learn techniques to focus intentions embracing self-empowerment and your own healing power... It's transformational! All registration: www.dreamhealer.com

MAY 13-15

"The Journey of Awakening" retreat on the

spiritual quest, with some of today's leading spiritual teachings & pointers; www.swanwickcentre.ca/ 250-744-3354 (Victoria).

MAY 14

Bicycle Babes Cruise For A Cause: 3pm, meet in front of The Mill Restaurant patio, 1199 W. Cordova St. A fashionable Bike Cruise around Stanley Park to kick off the upcoming summer season and to raise funds for a great charity! Check out our Facebook page for more details or call 778-891-4106.

MAY 14-15

Narcissism vs Leadership: Comfort Hotel & Conference Centre, 3020 Blanshard St., Victoria, Doors open 9:30am, Workshop: 10am-6pm. \$195, www.visionaryleaderscanada.com 604-786-5883.

MAY 15

Highpoint of the Spiritual year: Wesak Full Moon. Join us for world meditation. FREE. 2:30-4:30pm, Roundhouse Community Centre (Pacific @ Davie). 604.983.0926.

MAY 19

Free - Experience a Power Animal Drum Journey. Info evening hosted by the Institute of Shamanic Medicine. 7:30pm, Vancouver. RSVP early; space is limited: 1-877-329-8668 or info@shamanicmedicine.ca
www.shamanicmedicine.ca

MAY 21

The Heartbeat Event: Nourishing evening of food, music & entertainment. Featuring Zamir Dhanji & Crystal Ball Meditation & more. 7pm,

St. Marks Church, 1805 Larch St. Fundraiser for New Pathways, a holistic healing residential retreat centre. Tickets \$35/advance, \$40/door. Tickets at Banyen Books, 3608 W. 4th Ave. 604-737-8858.

MAY 20-22

Ayurveda and Yoga Lifestyle Workshop with the engaging and knowledgeable Girija Edwards with co-presenters Neelam Toprani and Christine O'Donnell.
www.saltspringcentre.com

MAY 21-22

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MAY 28

Open House: Institute of Holistic Nutrition, 10am-3:30pm, Vancouver Campus, 604 W. Broadway, Ste. 300. Refreshments & complimentary lectures. Natural Health exhibit, book sale, door prizes. 604-558-4000.
www.instituteofholisticnutrition.com

MAY 28-29

Narcissism vs Leadership: Holiday Inn Express Vancouver, 2889 East Hastings Street, Vancouver, Doors open 9:30am, Workshop: 10am-6pm Daily. \$195, www.visionaryleaderscanada.com 604-786-5883.

MAY 29

Achieving Vibrant Health: Join author Adam Hart (e3 For LIFE). Learn to attain health & happiness. Westin Bayshore Hotel, 10am-2pm. RSVP info@poweroffood.com
www.PowerofFood.com

JUN 10-12

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Mirabai Ceiba Sacred Chant concert: Sun, 7:30pm, Alix Goolden Hall, 907 Pandora Ave, Victoria. Tickets \$25 at Full Circle Studio or Online at www.SpiritVoyage.com

JUN 17-19

Spirit Plants Medicine Conference 2011

- Roots of Light: Ancient Wisdom for a new Humanity. At UBC. Films, lectures, ceremonies, panel discussions, shamans, scholars, etc. Contact Ashley for info: 604-644-4447 ashley@consciouslivingradio.org www.consciouslivingradio.org

SEP 29-OCT 2

American Monetary Institute Reform Conference, University Center, downtown Chicago. Dedicated to the independent study of monetary history, theory and reform. Info/registration at www.monetary.org or by phone 1-224-805-2200.

SUNDAYS

Centre for Spiritual Living: Join us every Sunday @ 9:15 AM & 11 AM for practical spirituality with great music. Meditation: 10:15 AM. 1880 Triumph Street, Suite 8 (at Victoria Drive), Vancouver. Info: 604-321-1225, www.cslvancouver.com

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic 6-10pm. One- hour sessions \$20. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

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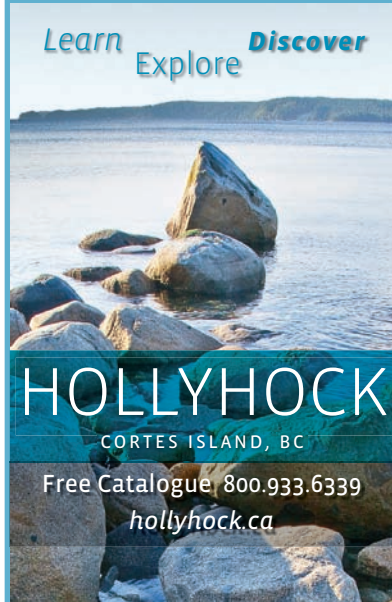


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Conservation Voters of BC announces federal endorsements



Clockwise from top left: Elizabeth May, Fin Donnelly, Randall Garrison, Joyce Murray, Mark Shmigelsky, Ujal Dosanjh.

In April, the Conservation Voters of BC announced its endorsements for the upcoming May 2 federal election. Conservation Voters of BC has a proven track record of helping elect environmental champions across party lines.

“Environmental issues will be decisive for many BC voters,” said Kevin Washbrook, director, Conservation Voters of BC. “Our endorsements are intended to put stronger environmental voices from all parties in Canada’s Parliament.”

Naomi Devine, a director of Conservation Voters of BC, said the endorsees will be assets to their parties and to Parliament. “These are individuals who have shown strong leadership on environmental issues, from banning tankers on BC’s North Coast, to preserving wilderness, to fighting climate change,” she said.

Endorsements

Elizabeth May (Green Party – Saanich-Gulf Islands): The national leader of Canada’s Green Party, Elizabeth brings an impeccable track record as a national environmental champion as well as a strong affinity for the issues in her local riding. Named by *Newsweek* as one of the world’s most influential women, she’s going to make history by being the first Green elected to Canada’s parliament.

Ujjal Dosanjh (Liberal – Vancouver South): Running for his third term as MP, Ujjal has been a strong proponent of an oil tanker ban on BC’s North Coast. As Premier of BC, Ujjal brought in Canada’s first moratorium on the grizzly bear hunt and significantly expanded BC parks and protected area system.

Joyce Murray (Liberal – Vancouver Quadra): As a federal MP, Joyce introduced a Private Member’s Bill to ban oil tanker traffic on BC’s North Coast and has championed action on climate change, renewable energy production, oil sands regulation and innovation for a greener economy.

Fin Donnelly (NDP – New Westminster-Coquitlam): A long-time protector of the Fraser River, Fin works hard to defend our marine ecosystem and coastal communities. As NDP Fisheries and Oceans Critic, he introduced legislation to protect wild salmon and ban dangerous oil super tankers off BC’s North Coast.

Randall Garrison (NDP – Esquimalt Juan de Fuca): As a councillor in Esquimalt, Randall secured Council support for aggressive targets for greenhouse gas reduction, as well as strong measures to achieve them. He was one of the first municipal councillors in BC to champion a resolution opposing oil tanker traffic on BC’s coast.

Mark Shmigelsky (NDP – Kootenay-Columbia): As mayor of Invermere, Mark has been a municipal leader on climate change. He supported the Idle-Free communities program, a ban on cosmetic pesticides and the local desire to keep the Jumbo Valley wild. As an MP, Mark will provide a strong voice for healthy communities and environmental protection.

Our previous endorsee, Denise Savoie in Victoria, remains a strong voice for the environment in Ottawa and Victoria and has been strong on banning tankers. However, we are making endorsements and investing resources in ridings where our engagement could have a strong impact on the outcome.

Conservation Voters of BC is a volunteer-run, non-partisan organization working to elect environmental champions from all parties to municipal, provincial and federal offices. We are non-partisan in that we believe environmentally-minded candidates can do good work within all of BC’s major parties. Thirty-one of the 40 candidates we have endorsed have been elected in six previous federal, provincial and municipal elections.

For more information on Conservation Voters, visit www.conservationvoters.ca. CVBC has also made an endorsement in the BC NDP Leadership campaign.

News

David Suzuki: Environment deserves your vote in the federal election.
Eco-survey 2011 shows voters what political parties would do to protect the environment.
Harper opposes banning oil tankers off B.C. coast.



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